



BE TRANSFORMED

THIS HANDOUT

BEING TRANSFORMED BY THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS CHAPTER FIFTEEN



FAST FACTS

ROMANS CHAPTER 15

- Strong Christians should bear with weak Christians.
- Through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures you might learn hope.
- The Prophets prophesied that the Gentiles would glorify God.
- St. Paul is the Apostle to the Gentiles.
- St. Paul preached the Gospel in areas that had not been introduced to Christianity.
- St. Paul plans to visit Rome - and then Spain - after first taking donations to Jerusalem.

ON THE CD

- THE BODY
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ROMANS 15

St. Paul continues in Romans chapter fifteen his exhortation to Christians with a strong faith to tolerate the religious scruples of those who have a weaker faith, rather than simply doing - and forcing upon the weaker Christians - what they believe to be right (15:1). Such patience and loving support for weaker Christians is necessary for their spiritual good (15:2; see also 14:21-23), and will result in "edifying" - meaning "building up" - the Body of Christ by strengthening *all* members of the Church (15:2; see also 14:19).

Strong Christians should not be too proud to humble themselves in order to help those with weaker faith, because Christ humbled Himself in order to save all people (Romans 15:3). In other words, strong Christians could not *be* strong Christians if Christ had not first humbled *Himself* and borne the reproaches for our sins (15:3, quoting Psalm 69:9).

Immediately after quoting Psalm 69:9, St. Paul makes what appears to be an aside to briefly mention why he frequently quotes the Old Testament. He quotes the Old Testament because Christians can learn from it, because such passages as Psalm 69 provide patience and comfort that ultimately builds hope within the believer (Romans 15:4).

If we are attentive to this message in Holy Scripture, then we will know better the patience and comfort provided by God, and be able to provide that same patience and comfort to Christians struggling with a weaker faith (Romans 15:5, 7). This patience and comfort will enable all Christians to glorify God (15:6).

In Romans 15:7, St. Paul says that Christ has received us - in verses 8-13 he builds upon this point to reinforce a central point of Romans chapters ten and eleven: Christ's

CALLED TO THE BODY

St. John Chrysostom explains the calling of all Christians mentioned in Ephesians 4:1:

On these accounts he saith, 'I, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called.' But what is this calling? Ye were called as His body, it is said. Ye have Christ as your head; and though you were 'enemies,' and had committed the misdeeds out of number, yet 'hath He raised you up with Him and made you to sit with Him.' (Ephesians 2:6.) A high calling this, and to high privileges, not only in that we have been called from that former state, but in that we are called both to such privileges, and by such a method.



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embrace includes both Jews *and* Gentiles. Bringing out the message of comfort and hope found in Holy Scripture, St. Paul then quotes several prophecies from the Old Testament to prove that this loving inclusion of the Gentiles has always been God's intention for His people. Jesus confirms for the Jews the promises made to the Righteous Forefathers (Romans 15:8), and further reaches out to the Gentiles so that they might glorify God (15:9), as is prophesied in Psalm 18:49 and exhorted in Deuteronomy 32:43 (15:9, 10).

St. Paul continues by quoting Psalm 117:1, exhorting Gentiles to praise God, and Isaiah 11:1, 10, proving that Jesus - a descendent of Jesse, the father of King David - would become the ruler and supreme hope of the Gentiles (Romans 15:11-12). He concludes with a prayer that this God of hope will fill all believers with joy, peace and hope through the Holy Spirit (15:13).

St. Paul now extends this point: Christ is the hope of the Gentiles, and the Apostle works to proclaim this hope to the Gentiles. Verse sixteen makes it clear that St. Paul's missionary work goes beyond that of simply reading and explaining Holy Scripture: the Greek word for "minister" - *leitourgos* - means that St. Paul serves the Gospel as a priest, offering the lives of the Gentiles that they have given to God to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

St. Paul emphasizes that he has done nothing of his own worthy of merit; instead, he glories in the work that God has done through his actions and teaching to bring the Gentiles into an obedient relationship (Romans 15:17-18). He has engaged in this missionary work throughout the majority of the Roman Empire, from Jerusalem to the east shore of the Adriatic (15:19). He further points out that he was careful to preach only in those areas that had yet to be visited by an Apostle, in order to avoid "build(ing) on another man's foundation" (15:20). By doing this, he has worked to fulfill the Holy Prophet Isaiah's proclamation that people who had not heard God's message would nonetheless hear and come to understand this truth (15:21, quoting Isaiah 52:15).

This missionary work throughout the Empire has prevented St. Paul from visiting Rome, but he now intends to do so on his way to preach the Gospel in Spain (Romans 15:22-24). St. Paul intends to visit Rome both as a base for visiting Spain, and because he hopes to rest and enjoy the Christian fellowship of the church in Rome (Romans 15:24). Before he can do so, however, he must first travel to Jerusalem to give to the church there donations from the Christians in Macedonia and Achaia (15:25-26). The reason St. Paul gives for this donation is valuable for understanding the way in which our tithes are used: because the Gentiles benefited spiritually from the work of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, the Gentiles felt obliged to share their material resources with the suffering church in Palestine (15:27).

While he hopes to visit Rome and Spain, St. Paul knows that certain factions in Judea hope to destroy him. He therefore asks the Christians in Rome to pray that he will escape plots for his destruction and joyfully spend time with them (Romans 15:30-33).

DETERMINE YOUR CALLING

How can you determine God's will? How can you identify the work or circumstances in which He wants to achieve His purpose in and through you? Thomas Addington and Stephen Graves, experts on living the Christian Faith in the workplace, two several helpful suggestions for determining God's specific calling for your life.

First, you should understand what Addington and Graves call your "unique gift mix." God has given you a very specific blend of talents, aptitudes, and interests. Many of the interests and aptitudes you have been given can be used far more successfully in some areas than in others. Therefore, if you are a very artistic, free-spirited person who enjoys spontaneous creativity, it is unlikely that you are called to serve God in an area that calls for strictly ordered, logical and rationale productivity. Likewise, if you are particularly talented and interested in technical or scientific areas, it is unlikely that you are called to serve God in an unstructured, emotionally based activity.

After you identify your "unique gift mix" which God has given to you, how can you identify the area in which He is calling you to use these gifts? Addington and Graves note four general ways in which God calls people:

- *God Calls You Directly By Name:* For example, He called Abraham, Moses, and St. Paul directly and personally. While this is very uncommon, it does happen.
- *God Places a Desire on Your Heart:* Just as the Holy Prophet Nehemiah was called to rebuild the Temple, and Isaiah's vision of heaven prompted him to prophesy to Israel, God may cause you to feel the responsibility to accomplish a task or meet a need.
- *God Arranges Your Path:* Just as the Holy Prophet Daniel had no choice but to serve as an administrator to four kings, and King Josiah had no choice but to serve as king, God may simply place you in a situation where my only option is in fact the fulfillment of my calling.
- *God Prepares an Attractive Option:* God may give you an opportunity that excites me with its potential to do something special, to make an impact on the world, to really be of help or benefit to others.

